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THE PREFECT SEIZED AS A SUSPECTED ROYALIST CHIEF.

SELF-CONCEIT, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

SEVERAL years since, two young men stopped at the inn at Montaign, waiting for the coach that was to take them on to Fontenay. One of them, who was dressed in a blouse of unbleached linen, had hanging from a crossed shoulder belt a gourd encased in wicker-work, and a tin box, adapted for holding botanical specimens, while in his hand he carried a geological hammer. His

open countenance beamed with health and good humour, while that of his companion was bilious and anxious looking. The latter wore an elegant travelling costume; but a pair of large blue spectacles concealed his eyes, and by no means tended to improve the expression of his face. He had just opened a letter, and was preparing to read it for his friend.

"Is it from your cousin, colonel Leclerc?" asked the latter.

"From his wife. I will read it for you.

"'My dear Francis—As soon as you receive this letter, set out to come to us. The new prefect of La Vendée is to pass a few days here. You know, of course, that his name is Vernon, that he is brother to the minister of justice, and that the place of attorney-general, which you are seeking, will be infallibly granted on his recommendation. Come, then, and try to meet his approbation. He is a man of quiet, simple habits, who never assumes authority except when he wishes to confer a benefit or to redress a wrong. He is coming to our house in order to enjoy a few days' relaxation. My husband did not forget to put in a good word for you in his last letter; but M. Vernon replied that he must see you and judge for himself. Your success, therefore, will entirely depend on the impression you make on him, and I hope it will be a favourable one.

"'Your affectionate cousin,

"'LUCY LECLERC.'

"You see, my dear Naquet," continued the embryo official, as he folded the letter, "that I have every reason to hope for success."

"Certainly," answered the young naturalist; "it seems to be highly probable that M. Vernon will obtain your nomination."

"You say that very coldly, André."

"Because I feel frightened at the difficult and delicate functions you will have to fulfil. You, Francis, being the representative of public morality, will hold in your hands the honour of individuals and the repose of families. In such a position, small faults will become great, and an error will be treated as a crime."

"Oh, you may make yourself easy on that score," interrupted Blondell, with a self-sufficient air. "Besides the close study that I have made of human nature, I have an instinct that seldom or never deceives me."

"Take care," said André, shaking his head; "what is called an *instinct* or an *impression* is frequently nothing but a hasty judgment, the result of former prejudices. We mistake for a sudden mysterious illumination, what is really nothing but the suggestion of our own good or bad humour. We then seek to justify our opinion, keeping out of sight whatever may tend to invalidate it, and thus laboriously deceive ourselves with imaginary proofs. This method of proceeding is dangerous for all, but especially for him who has to administer the law."

Blondel smiled.

"All depends on one's powers of observation," said he, confidently. "A mind continually awake observes the slightest circumstances, and draws inductions from the smallest details. It is with men as with the geological basins which you study, my dear Naquet. When the upper strata are known, it is easy to guess at those that lie beneath. An attorney-general, you perceive, ought to scrutinise all whom he sees, remark their words, their movements, and *class* them as you do the plants you meet. A practised eye can turn a man inside out, like a glove. What favours the greater part of the disorders of society is the indifference and inattention of those who ought to watch over it. See in this country, for example, the greater number of the insurgent royalist leaders have not been arrested."

"Because they hide themselves."

"Let me be once appointed, and I'll engage to capture them all within a month."

The young men's conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of the vehicle which was to take them to Fontenay. The postilion wore a small hat, a brown vest, and striped pantaloons—the costume so well known during the wars of the *blues* and the *brigands*. He looked at the two travellers with that prudent, silent attention so characteristic of the Vendean peasants.

"At what hour this evening shall we arrive?" asked Blondel.

"At what hour?" repeated the peasant. "That depends on circumstances, master: to go fast, one must have, as they say, smooth roads and good horses."

"But, at all events, we shall arrive before nightfall?"

"Most likely; the days are long."

"Are we to be the only travellers?"

"Don't be uneasy; the coach is large enough."

This said coach was a sort of long covered wagon; and the postilion, as he spoke, opened the leathern apron in front.

"Take the best places, gentlemen," he said; "in front you'll have air, and you'll see the country: I will be back in a moment." And, jerking backwards the horse, which was impatient to start, "Quiet, *pataud*, quiet!" he cried; "stand! I'm going for my whip." He raised the corner of the apron, fastened the reins inside it, and went into the inn. Blondel looked after him.

"Did you remark that man?" said he to his companion; "I'll wager that he belonged to the insurgents."

"Why do you think so?"

"His manner, his dress, his evasive way of answering my questions, and the name of *pataud*,* which he gave his horse."

Naquet burst out laughing.

"Why, Francis, one ought to have a care how one meets you in your official rambles. You *botanise* on men, pick them to pieces, as I do wild flowers."

Just then the postilion reappeared.

"Get on!" he shouted to his horse; and, jumping on the driving-seat, he set off at a round pace. After they had passed the suburbs of Montaign, a traveller seated at the road side stood up and made a signal to the driver. The latter immediately pulled up.

"Ah, master, I was looking for you," said he, as he got down.

* A nickname bestowed by the Vendean peasants on the *blues*, or republican soldiers. It literally means a sort of mongrel dog with thick legs.

"And I was waiting for you, my lad: you're late."

"I had to deliver the letters you gave me. You're not afraid to travel in the twilight?"

"On the contrary, I like to avoid the heat."

"There's more than one of your mind in this country," said the peasant, with a significant wink. "No matter; we'll soon make up for lost time."

"Very good," said the new-comer; and having saluted the two young men, he took his place on the farthest seat of the wagon, remarking that he disliked the sunshine. Struck by this, Blondel set himself to watch him attentively.

He was a man of about forty years old, with well formed features and intelligent eyes. His dress was that of a sportsman, well made and of fine materials. No doubt the walk he had taken had fatigued him; for, leaning back in the corner of the wagon, he drew his cap over his eyes, and seemed to fall asleep.

Francis immediately turned to the driver: "You did not tell us we were to have this travelling companion," he said, in a whisper.

"Why, have you not got room enough?" laughed the postilion.

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, where's the odds? You may see that he's a respectable traveller like yourselves."

"You know him, then?"

"From having seen him yesterday at the inn, when he gave me some commissions to do for him."

"But you know his name?"

"Do I know yours? My business is to carry people in my wagon, and not names in my head." So saying, the driver, apparently weary of Francis's questions, whipped on his horses and began to whistle. A long silence ensued. It was broken at length by Naquet asking the name of a village through which they were passing.

"Les Herbiers," answered their fellow-traveller, who was now awake.

"Right," said the postilion. "The mayor of it is my relative."

"M. Lariot."

"Ah! so you know him?"

"A *blue*, as they say in this country," said the other, smiling.

The driver shrugged his shoulders.

"Well! every one has his weak point. Lariot has served; but it does not hinder his being an honest man, incapable of hurting those who do not think with him."

"I know—I understand," replied the stranger, smiling; "Lariot is an indulgent man, and he is right; but for his good sense, there would be bloodshed in the parish."

"That's true," said the driver.

"His prudence shall not be forgotten," muttered the stranger to himself.

Blondel had been listening attentively.

"I see that monsieur belongs to this country," said he, fixing his eyes on the stranger.

"I do not," was the reply.

"I should have supposed you did, from your acquaintance with the places and the people. But from what I have just heard, it would seem that the royalists are rife in this canton."

"So they are throughout La Vendée."

"It seems very extraordinary that the local magistrates do not show more zeal in the fulfilment of their duty."

The stranger replied only by a slight gesture.

"How does it happen," continued Blondel, looking fixedly at him, "that the leaders of the last insurrection have not all been arrested?"

"Because, apparently, the matter is not so easy as you imagine. The royalist leaders don't go about the roads with their names written on their hats; and, despite of all your watchfulness, you might jostle one of them without recognising him."

"Perhaps you are wrong there," said Blondel, significantly.

The stranger bowed. "I shall not attempt," he said, in a slightly ironical tone, "to impugn monsieur's penetration."

Francis bit his lips, and the conversation dropped.

Night had fallen, and the wagon rolled slowly along the deserted road. The wind had risen, and whistled with a mournful tone across the heath. Occasionally, a tall cross, looming through the darkness, indicated, as it does in Roman Catholic countries, the place of some recent murder, whose story the postilion did not fail to relate. Although the insurrection had been put down, bands of outlaws were still roaming through the district, and this was by no means an unlikely place to encounter one. Naquet half seriously, half in jest, made a remark to this effect to Blondel.

"And we have no arms," replied the future attorney-general.

"Very fortunately," interrupted the stranger.

"Why so, monsieur?"

"If we should be attacked, it would be too suddenly and by too great a number to render resistance of the least avail. In such a case, the best plan is always to submit quietly, and leave vengeance for a future opportunity."

They had now reached the foot of a long steep ascent, and the postilion requested the travellers to get out and walk. As soon as the two friends found themselves apart from their companion, Blondel said: "Did you perceive the drift of his advice?"

"Certainly; I thought it very wise."

"But not very comforting: we shall probably be attacked."

"Why do you think so?"

"Don't you see that our driver is a *chouan?*" *

"Bah!"

"And our fellow traveller a royalist chief?"

"Stuff! Do you think an outlaw would venture to travel in a public conveyance? What has put such a thing into your head?"

"What! Were you not struck with his appearance? Whence does he come? Where is he going? What is his name?"

"All questions that he might as fairly ask respecting ourselves."

"But did you not remark the embarrassment of the driver when I questioned him, and the

* A sort of owl. It was a nickname given to the Vendean royalists, because they used to imitate the cry of the owl, as a signal amongst themselves.

anxiety of this stranger to hide himself in the farthest corner of the wagon?"

"In order to shelter himself from the sun."

"And why did he not get up, as we did, at the inn?"

"Because he chose to have a walk first."

Blondel shrugged his shoulders.

"The sun! a walk! You believe all that! And now tell me how it comes that, if he does not belong to this country, he happens to know the places and the people so well?"

"I can't say."

"Well, Naquet, my impressions seldom deceive me, and here I have proofs. This man, I tell you, is a royalist chief—very likely the leader of them all."

"Come, come, Francis, you allow your imagination to carry you too far."

"Well, we shall see: you are at liberty to shut your eyes, but I choose to walk with mine open, and will act accordingly."

By this time they had passed the hill, and the three travellers resumed their places. Soon afterwards, the sound of a horse galloping was heard. The stranger raised the leathern curtain that hung at the back of the wagon, and called out: "Pierre, is it you?"

"Yes, master."

"You will ride on before, and wait for me."

"Yes, master." And the rider trotted on briskly.

"Who is that man?" asked Naquet.

"My servant," replied the stranger.

Blondel touched his friend with his elbow.

"Do you still doubt?" he whispered. "There is certainly an ambuscade prepared for us, and that fellow has ridden on to announce our approach."

"Why should you think so?"

Blondel made a gesture of contempt.

"The pistol would touch your breast before you would think of danger," whispered he. "Remember our tutor's old adage, 'Forewarned, forearmed.' Luckily I am here, and I promise you I won't let them have their own way."

"Are we not approaching a village?" he asked aloud.

"Yes, St. Hermione," said the postilion.

"Don't we stop here?"

"Just as the gentlemen please," replied the driver.

"It would be a useless delay," said the stranger.

"Then we'll go on," said the driver.

"No," said Blondel, decidedly.

"We are only an hour distant from Fontenay; it would be better to get on there without stopping."

"Excuse me, monsieur," said Francis, firmly; "my friend and I choose to stop here. And this, I see, is an inn," he added, as they came up to a house, with a sign-board in front.

"That's not where I stop," said the driver, preparing to pass on.

"But it is where *I* stop," retorted the young man, angrily, seizing the reins. "Pull up here, I desire you."

The peasant obeyed, but with a bad grace. The two young men got down alone.

"*He* does not follow us," whispered Blondel. "He's afraid to show himself."

"More likely he is annoyed at this delay," replied Naquet.

Blondel shook his head. They entered the kitchen of the inn; and while warming themselves before the cheerful fire, a sound of clashing arms made them turn round. A *gendarme* walked up to them with the usual demand: "Your papers!"

Blondel and Naquet handed their passports, which the honest functionary unfolded, and looked over with an eye which the fumes of wine had visibly obscured.

"Good!" cried he, putting his finger on the seal. "All right, my brave fellows! You're none of the *chouans* that I am looking for—for there's no lack of them in this country—the gallows-birds! But we'll start them from their nests! Were you the only travellers?"

"No," replied Blondel; "we had a companion, who would not get out of the wagon."

"Ho, ho! Did he want to conceal himself?"

"He may have good reasons for so doing," said the young man.

The brigadier went up close to him.

"Have you any idea, citizen, who he is?" asked he, confidentially.

"I would have you examine him with care," was the mysterious reply.

The *gendarme* left the room, but reappeared in a moment.

"No more a traveller in the wagon than in my cartouch box," he said.

"Then he must have taken to flight!"

"Flight!" repeated the brigadier; "where's the driver?"

"Here," cried he, walking in.

"What have you done with your third traveller?"

"*Ma foi!* when he saw the others getting down, he set off by himself."

"Set off?" cried Blondel, turning to the *gendarme*. "No doubt he saw you, and was afraid of being arrested."

"Why, what do you suppose him to be?"

"A *chouan*."

"What's that you say, master?" asked the postilion.

"Don't attend to that man's representations," cried Blondel, eagerly. "I'm certain the other is a royalist chief, and you ought to make sure of him."

"That I will!" exclaimed the brigadier, darting out of the inn.

"See what you have done," said Naquet to Blondel: "you have denounced a perfect stranger on a parcel of vague suspicions."

"I tell you, the fellow is an insurgent leader."

"But consider——"

"We shall see. I shall not be sorry to prove to you in this instance, the possibility of arresting a specious looking criminal, just by being on the alert."

A musket-shot was heard. Both the young men rushed out of the inn, followed by all the people of the place. They soon perceived the *gendarme*, dragging the stranger along by the collar.

"You fired?" cried Naquet.

"Oh! merely to warn this gentleman to stop," said the *gendarme*.

"Monsieur is not wounded?"

"Happily not," replied the stranger; "but I await an explanation of such conduct."

"That's easily given, my prince," said the *gendarme;* "you are arrested as a suspected character, and because this gentleman has discovered that you are an insurgent leader."

"I!"

"If it be not so, you can easily disprove the charge," said Blondel.

"And may I ask what has caused you to suspect me?"

The young man in reply recapitulated all that had passed, and rendered his account a very clever piece of special pleading.

"And so it is on such vague presumptions that you have ventured to base your judgment, monsieur, and have thus exposed me to this man's violence. I think I have a right to inquire who you are yourself."

The young man told his name, and the stranger started.

"Blondel!" repeated he. "Are you not cousin to general Leclerc?"

"Yes."

"And are you not soliciting the post of attorney-general?"

"How can you possibly know that?"

The stranger smiled. "Your family is not unknown to me," he said: "look there!" And he showed him a letter, in whose address Francis recognised his cousin's writing. It was directed to M. Vernon.

"The prefect!" cried the astounded Blondel.

Every one present uttered an exclamation of surprise, and the brigadier prepared to make his escape.

"Remain!" said M. Vernon, in a severe tone. "It was fortunate for you, monsieur, that your brutal mistake affected me in place of another; I have a right to pardon you in my own case. As to M. Blondel," added he, turning towards the disconcerted young man, "a time, I hope, may come when he will perceive that being too prompt to think evil of our neighbours is far less a proof of perspicuity than of malevolence; and that, before receiving a legal right to accuse others, it is needful to possess both prudence and impartiality."

Francis bowed profoundly, and began to mutter some excuses; but without listening to him, M. Vernon saluted Naquet politely, and resumed his journey to Fontenay. Scarcely had he departed, when the brigadier, thoroughly sobered by the fright he had had, advanced towards Blondel with clenched fists, exclaiming: "It is my turn now to give you a thrashing!"

Naquet stopped him.

"Be quiet," said he gently; "my friend's error has been sufficiently punished."

"Punished!" cried the *gendarme;* "and my situation, which I all but lost through him!"

"Yes," said Naquet, in a low voice; "but you saved yours, and he has just lost his!"

THE QUEEN OF A LITERARY COTERIE.

PART II. HER REIGN.

Lady Blessington has passed the climax of her fortunes. Happy she was not when at their height —amidst the triumphs of St. James's-square; in her delightful Neapolitan palace-home; in the enjoyment of all the pleasures which beauty, talent, the society of the most cultured intellects, rank, wealth, unbounded luxury, and unbounded adulation, could bestow. She has had a terrible lesson read to her, too, of the uncertain tenure by which all that belongs to this world is held. Quickly fading, as well as unsatisfactory when possessed, she knows the whole to be. Will she now, then, seek peace and joy in other directions? Alas! for the infatuation of our poor human nature when left to itself. Lady Blessington is as firmly wedded to the world as ever—as eager in pursuit of its worthless good.

One of her friends, the barrister Jekyll, was so fond of town life, that he said, "if he were compelled to live in the country, he would have the approach to his house paved like the streets of London, and would have a hackney-coach to drive up and down all day long." London was lady Blessington's world, also: the society and excitement which had unhappily become indispensable to her were there chiefly to be found.

The spring of 1832 found her established in a house, furnished with her usual taste and magnificence, in Seymour-place. Then commenced her second London career, which extended over nearly twenty years, and by which she is best known to the public. Now, as before, she aims at sovereignty in the world of fashion and of fashionable literature. Her *soirées* will be the most brilliant, her *réunions* none may surpass. For this purpose all her graceful talents and attractions are tasked. And not in vain. "The *salons* of lady Blessington were opened nightly to men of genius and learning, and persons of celebrity of all climes, as well as to travellers of every European city of distinction. Her abode became a centre of attraction for the *beau monde* of the intellectual classes—a place of *réunion* for remarkable persons of talent or eminence of some sort or another; and certainly the most agreeable resort of men of literature, art, science, of strangers of distinction, travellers and public characters of various pursuits; the most agreeable that ever existed in this country."

Willis's description of these *réunions* is pronounced by Dr. Madden the most graphic which has been given, and as such is quoted by him. Our readers will, therefore, not be disinclined to look at a few of his portraits. First comes her ladyship.

"In a long library, lined alternately with splendidly-bound books and mirrors, and with a deep window of the breadth of the room, opening upon Hyde-park, I found lady Blessington alone. The picture, to my eye, as the door opened, was a very lovely one; a woman of remarkable beauty, half-buried in a *fauteuil* of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp suspended from the centre of the arched ceiling; sofas, couches, ottomans, and busts, arranged in rather a crowded sumptuousness through the room; enamel tables, covered with expensive and elegant trifles, in every corner;

and a delicate white hand, relieved on the back of a book, to which the eye was attracted by the blaze of its diamond rings. As the servant mentioned my name, she rose and gave me her hand very cordially."

The next evening the American found his hostess in full dress, in the drawing-room, surrounded by a coterie of distinguished men. He thus again writes:—"Towards twelve o'clock, Mr. Lytton Bulwer was announced. I had made up my mind how he *should* look, and, between prints and descriptions, thought I could scarcely be mistaken in my idea of his person. No two things could be more unlike, however, than the ideal of Mr. Bulwer in my mind, and the real Mr. Bulwer who followed the announcement. I liked his manners extremely. He ran up to lady B. with the joyous heartiness of a boy let out of school, and the 'How d'ye, Bulwer?' went round as he shook hands with everybody, in the style of welcome usually given to 'the best fellow in the world.'" .... "Bulwer's head is phrenologically a fine one. His forehead retreats very much, but is very broad and well marked, and the whole air is that of decided mental superiority. His nose is aquiline; his complexion fair; his hair profuse, curly, and of a light auburn. A more good-natured, habitually smiling expression could hardly be imagined. Perhaps my impression is an imperfect one, as he was in the highest spirits, and was not serious the whole evening for a minute; but it is strictly and faithfully my impression."

Another remarkable man is thus described by our gossiping traveller. "Disraeli had arrived before me at lady Blessington's, and sat in the deep window, looking out upon Hyde-park, with the last rays of daylight reflected from the gorgeous gold flowers of a splendidly embroidered waistcoat. Patent leather pumps, a white stick, with a black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pockets, served to make him, even in the dim light, rather a conspicuous object. Disraeli has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. He is lividly pale, and, but for the energy of his action, and the strength of his lungs, would seem a victim to consumption. His eye is black as Erebus, and has the most mocking and lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His hair is as extraordinary as his taste in waistcoats. A thick, heavy mass of jet black ringlets falls over his left cheek, almost to his collarless stock; while on the right it is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl's, and shines most unctuously

'With thy incomparable oil, Macassar.'"

In 1836, her ladyship removed to Gore-house, where she resided for thirteen years. This same Gore-house* had formerly been the residence of the excellent Wilberforce, who thus writes of it in his Diary:—"Walked from Hyde-park-corner, repeating the 119th psalm in great comfort. We are just one mile from the turnpike-gate at Hyde-park-corner, having about three acres of pleasure-ground around my house, or rather behind it, and several old trees, walnut and mulberry, of thick foliage. I can sit and read under their shade, which I delight in doing, with as much admiration of the beauties of nature (remembering at the same time the words of my favourite poet, 'Nature is but a name for an effect, whose cause is God'), as if I were two hundred miles from the city."

Strangely different are the associations of Gore-house now. A brilliant course lady Blessington's is called; yet compare its real joylessness, its heart desolation, with the glad seriousness, the fulness of domestic bliss, and of all which renders life a beautiful and harmonious thing, which that of the God-fearing man exhibits, and who will venture to characterise the one as a life of pleasure in the genuine sense of that word—the other as a life of gloom?

The establishment at Gore-house was sustained in a style of greater magnificence even than that of Seymour-place, its *soirées* more influential and of greater pretensions, congregating "a higher class of men of great intellect" than used to assemble in her rooms. She received company every night from ten till half-past twelve, and there she sat "the Minerva of the shrine, whom all the votaries of literature and art worshipped." "The swinging of the censer before the fair face of lady Blessington never ceased in those *salons;* and soft accents of homage to her beauty and talent seldom failed to be whispered in her ear, while she sat enthroned in her well-known *fauteuil*, holding high court in queen-like state—'the most gorgeous lady Blessington.'"

Amidst all this adulation, lady Blessington's old friends could observe increasing traces of care, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. And, alas! she had ample cause for such feelings. Hitherto we have glanced at the current of lady Blessington's life, as it sparkled in the drawing-room and to the public eye. But there were various undercurrents of a very different hue.

At her husband's death she found herself reduced from the 30,000*l.* of their former income, to a jointure of 2000*l.* This sum was altogether insufficient for the cost of such an establishment as her ladyship determined to keep; and, besides, she had a host of needy relatives to provide for, her exertions for whom is one of the brightest spots in this strange history. More money she must have, and authorship, formerly resorted to for pleasure or fame, was the only mode open to her of procuring it. On her second settlement in the metropolis, she applied herself to the work as a profession, and a regular means of support.

Her "Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron" was published, as already mentioned, in 1832. In 1839, her "Idler in Italy," in three volumes, was given to the world, and was succeeded by her "Idler in France." Novel after novel, verses, reviews, whatever would sell, proceeded from her pen with more rapidity than suited her publishers at all times. But the *prestige* of her rank and name, and fashionable notoriety, procured for her wares a market and price which assuredly their merits could not have secured. To novel writing she added the editing of illustrated annuals; these were the palmy days of such pretty books. "The Keepsake," Heath's "Book of Beauty," and "Gems of Beauty," all claimed

* Lady Blessington and literature were succeeded, in Gore House, by Soyer, with his soups and sauces. The place is now purchased by the commissioners, for the site and grounds of the new National Gallery.

for their title-pages the name of this noble and fair lady. For some years her literary income is supposed to have amounted to 2000*l.*, or even more. At length, however, both novels and annuals began to fail her; the public were wearied of her tales, and of the whole tribe of gilded and decorated inanities which issued with the dying year. Then her ladyship, fertile in resources, turned to the newspapers. The "Daily News" was started in 1846. Lady Blessington was engaged "to contribute, in confidence, any sort of intelligence she might like to communicate, of the sayings, doings, memoirs, or movements in the fashionable world." 800*l.* per annum was the writer's estimate of the value of her services; the managers were disposed to give 400*l.* only, for a year certain, or for half a year at the rate of 500*l.* This arrangement was accepted, but at the end of six months her ladyship closed the engagement. Her last work of fiction first appeared in the columns of a London *Sunday* paper!

Sadly fagging and harassing were these literary toils. No servant in her establishment had half such hard work as the mistress. A friend describes her as writing away like a steam-engine. In a letter to Landor, she says:—"I have been very unwell of late. The truth is, the numerous family of father, mother, sister, brother, and his six children, that I have to write for, compels me to write, when my health would demand a total repose from literary exertion." In five weeks one of her novels was written. Writing to Dr. Madden on the 4th of March, she says: "When I tell you that I have six hundred pages to write and compose between this and the end of the month, for a work which, unless completed by that period, I forfeit an engagement, you will understand why I cannot read over the story you sent me, and which, I am persuaded, is like all I have seen from your pen—graphic and full of talent." Again we have her complaining: "I am so constantly and fatiguingly occupied in copying and correcting, that I have not a moment to myself." And further: "I am literally worn out. I look for release from my literary toils more than ever a slave did from bondage. I never get out any day before five o'clock. I am suffering in health from too much writing."

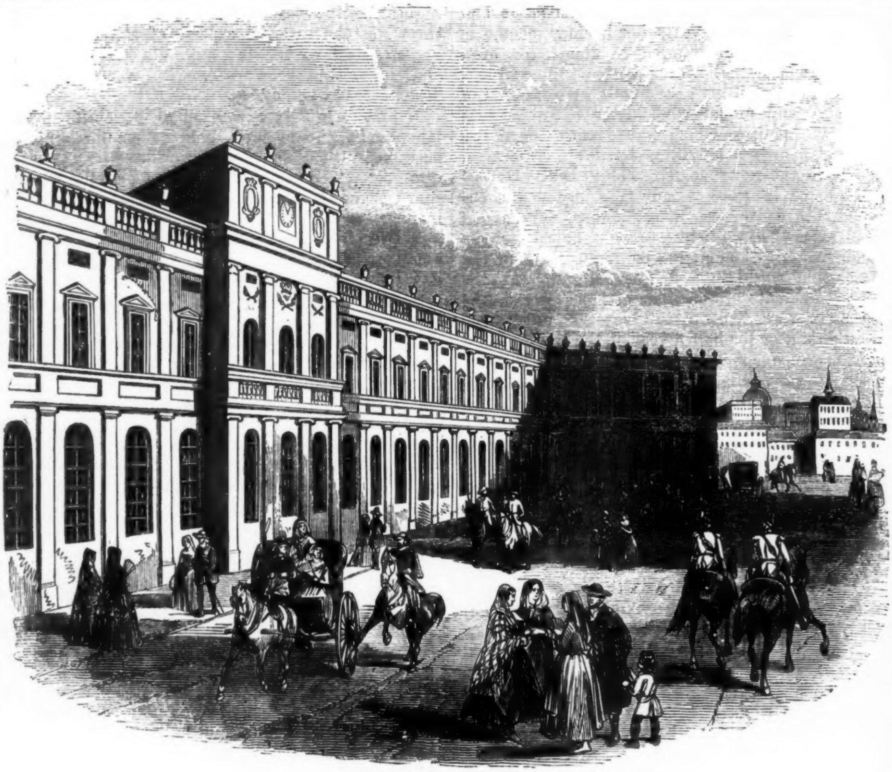
Of the character of her works it is needless to speak now. She had flatterers, indeed, who ventured on the enormous absurdity of comparing her with Madame de Stäel, whereas she really occupies a very low place amongst our modern female writers. The award of the public is given in a rapidly approaching, if not already consummated, oblivion, so far as her literary productions are concerned. Even her biographer hopes for a permanent place in English literature only for her "Conversations with Lord Byron," and, perhaps, her "Idler in Italy." "The interest taken in the writer," he allows, "was the main source of the temporary interest that was felt in her literary performances." Utterly destitute of all depth and earnestness of character, her books are frivolous and shallow. There was no great aim or purpose, and no moral strength in her own character; and there is nothing in her works which might create or sustain such in others. Nor is there any special talent to render them temporarily amusing. Her highest gifts were a facile pen, which readily threw off the external aspects of society around her (she had no rod to gauge its heart depths), and a certain shrewdness, with a considerable dash of good humour.

It may seem surprising that with such mediocre talents she should have held so commanding a position in the social literary world. Many things combined to the attainment of an end for which she worked hard. Her singularly fascinating manner, partly proceeding, it would appear, from a real kindness of heart, ever shown in an eager readiness to serve her friends—the credit of which it were unjust to deny her—went a great way. "There was," we are told, "a geniality in the warmth of her Irish feelings, an abandonment of all care, of all apparent consciousness of her own powers of attraction; a glowing sunshine of good humour and good nature in the smiles, and wit, and laughter of this lovely woman, seldom surpassed in the looks and expression of any person, however beautiful. Her voice was sweetly modulated, and low, clear, silver-toned. All her beauty, without this exquisite sweetness of her voice, and the witchery of its tones, would have been only a secondary attraction." Then she had a great aptitude in eliciting any peculiar talents in those around her, and she had ability and knowledge sufficient to enable her to appreciate the higher endowments of others, and to cultivate her own conversational powers with success. Add to this the charms of her rank, the rare *agremens* of her elegant mansion, where all was arranged with exquisite taste, and all so as to be most pleasing to her guests; the fashion of her *réunions*, the company proving, no doubt, mutually attractive; and the constant presence of a friend, whose fiat in all matters of taste was decisive, and who is declared by a French periodical to have "taught the English aristocracy how to converse:" taking all these circumstances into account, we perceive some of the springs of lady Blessington's influence.

TWELVE HOURS IN MADRID.

Madrid—standing, as it does, almost in the centre of Spain, and upwards of 2400 feet above the level of the sea; with its arid environs, the snow-capped Guadarrama, standing in the distance, like a stern sentinel watching over it; the Manzanares, whose bed is spanned by two noble bridges, although for the greater part of the year it is a mere fordable rivulet—is unlike any other city in the world. It has been both over-praised and too severely criticised by Spaniards and foreigners, according to their respective predilections, associations, prejudices, and the circumstances under which travellers have visited it.

Let us stroll down the Calle de Alcalá, that fine street which is entered from the Zaragoza road through that noble entrance to Madrid, the beautiful gate of Alcalá. This street is as wide and as long as Portland-place, and, like it, is situated in the aristocratic quarter of the metropolis; but here the resemblance entirely ceases. Adorned by the magnificent fountain of Cybele at its commencement, where it is crossed by the celebrated promenade of the Prado, it slopes towards the far-



THE ROYAL PALACE, MADRID.

famed Puerta del Sol, or Gate of the Sun, with a graceful curve; and though it is embellished in some parts with fine public edifices, and private mansions of great architectural beauty, in others the aspect is of a totally different description. In the passages, or entries, between the outer and inner door-ways of the majority of the good houses, there are a variety of shops, or stalls, which, with their owners, take up half the width of the entry, leaving barely space for persons to pass to the inner door. In these recesses there are cobblers, tailors, sellers of gilt trinkets and other cheap finery, etc. Moveable shelves are suspended by hooks driven into the walls of the entries, and on these shelves, or sometimes on tables which double up like camp stools, the goods are displayed for sale. In some of the wider doorways are to be seen large rolls of matting made of espárto, a fibre produced in Valencia, and manufactured into matting for covering the floors of Spanish houses, as we do ours with carpets. This matting is of thick or thin texture, according to the season in which it is to be used. Variegated patterns are woven into it with the fibres dyed of various colours. There stands the Valencian in his picturesque attire, waiting with oriental calmness for customers, whom, when they have fixed upon a pattern, he accompanies to their homes, his assistant carrying the roll of matting, and a long clasp knife, a packing needle, and some espárto-fibres to be used as threads to sew the lengths together after his master has adjusted them to the room, and cut off the proper quantities with the long clasp knife.

Mark here and there the humble artisan cooking his mid-day meal just outside the door of his queer little shop! His culinary apparatus consists of a portable chafing-dish made of a light coloured clay, with some lighted charcoal in it, and a small earthen pot called a *puchéro*, in which simmers his frugal dish, composed, perhaps, of a few square bits of *tocino*, or bacon, some large yellow peas called *garbanzos*, onions, or garlic, slices of bread, etc. At night all his stock in trade is removed to his humble dwelling, most likely in a remote part of the city.

We will cross the way to that *posáda*, or homely inn, next door to a grand mansion. A large *galéra*, or stage wagon, is standing in the street opposite the inn; and as we pass along we hear the tinkling of the little silver-toned bells, as the mules, round whose necks they are suspended, champ their provender in the spacious stables within. Look at the group opposite the *posáda!* Half-a-dozen stout, well-built, black-whiskered young men, muffled up in ample brown cloth cloaks, and wearing cone-shaped black felt hats with narrow rims turned up all round, and broad

silk bands. A strip of tinsel glitters along one side of some of these hats; others have a black silk tassel drooping over the crown. All these men have paper-cigars in their mouths: there is not much conversation, but every now and then looks of quick intelligence are exchanged as a passenger goes by. I cannot tell you exactly who or what these people are: perhaps they are horse-dealers, or owners of *galéras*, or other conveyances for travellers; possibly *ladrones*, robbers, watching for departing travellers, whom, by and by, they may waylay on the lonely country road. They may be *contrabandistas*, smugglers, or bull-fighters.

In this curious street there are coffee-houses, stores where provisions of all kinds are sold, in either large or small quantities, wine-shops, gold and silversmiths—in whose cramped shop-windows there is no display of the costly articles to be seen within—embroiderers, tailors, dentists, and here and there barbers. The latter have shallow bright brass, broad-edged basins suspended over their little shop-doors, a piece (as in the signs of our own country) being cut out of a part of the rim so that the basin may be adjusted to the throat, whilst the barber lathers the chin with his flexible hand. These basins exactly resemble the utensil described by Cervantes as having been placed on his head by the doughty knight Don Quixote, and dignified by him with the name of Mambrino's helmet. The Spanish barbers are great guitar-players, as in the olden time; moreover, they are privileged *sangradóres*, or bleeders; and outside many of their shops are sign-boards representing a naked foot with the blood flowing from it into a broad flattish basin. Bleeding in the foot is very common in Spain.

In some of the large gateways are drawn up, waiting to be hired, large heavy coaches, drawn by four or perhaps six tall stout mules; in others are quaint one-horse vehicles, with heads to them, called *calésas;* the *caléséros*, or drivers of which, wear pointed hats, with ends of gaily patterned cotton handkerchiefs, with which their heads are bound, flowing out behind; their jackets are made of thick brown cloth, with large red, or blue, or parti-coloured patches, carefully stitched and ornamented at the elbows; not repairs, however, but *new* patches put on when the jacket was made! This is the favourite style of the *caléséro*, who also wears a smart waistcoat, a red woollen sash round his loins, short breeches of velveteen, or some such material, with, perhaps, silver filagree buttons down the sides, ribbed stockings without feet, and *alpargatas* or hempen sandals, fixed on by blue or red worsted cords twisted round the instep and ankle. Until the last few years, these were the only vehicles that plied for hire in this and other streets of Madrid. Now, there are some light public carriages called *citadinas*, and a very few omnibuses.

But we must not linger in the Calle de Alcalá. It is on the stroke of twelve at noon, and the stream of gossipers is in full flow towards the Puerta del Sol: we will follow it, and shall be there in a few minutes. On this spot formerly stood the eastern gate of the city, and on its front was sculptured a blazing sun. The ancient portal has long since been removed, or fallen to decay, and its site, instead of being at the oriental edge of the Spanish capital, is now in its centre. Until noon the Puerta del Sol is comparatively deserted; but as soon as the clock of the rather mean-looking church of Buen Sucéso, hard by, strikes the hour of twelve, the motley groups begin to cluster, and gradually take up their lounging positions in this buzzing human hive. The only permanent occupants of a section of the Puerta del Sol are the *aguadores*, or water-carriers, who are to be seen from early morning until sunset grouped around the fountain, which, together with the small church of Buen Sucéso, forms one of its boundaries; their numbers varying according to their departure for, or return from, various distances with their barrels. The majority are *Gallégos,* as the natives of the province of Galicia are called. Sturdy, thrifty, and trustworthy, they leave their homes early in life, and labour in their useful callings for many years, until having put by sufficient for their frugal wants, they return to their distant native places for the remainder of their lives: the Gallégo's attachment to his province is proverbial. Some of the *aguadores* are Asturians; also hard-working and generally honest people.

At the moment I arrived at the Puerta del Sól, on the day in question, and when it was not yet thronged, a fierce battle was imminent between some Gallégos and Asturians, who were struggling to get possession of the spouts of the fountain, to fill their water-casks. Look at that sturdy Gallégo, his head bare, his rough woollen vest thrown open, his coarse but clean full shirt-sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, displaying his brown muscular arms, the red woollen sash girt round his waist, and his loose, stout linen breeches descending a little below the knee; he wears coarse thread stockings knitted in Galicia—and such a pair of shoes! They are very large, and high, with two or three layers of hard, stout, brownish upper-leathers: the soles are at least an inch thick, and studded all over with very heavy nails. See how he brandishes his empty water-cask, which he grasps by the shining iron handle that on ordinary occasions serves him to carry it, filled with water, on his brawny shoulders! Mark his tanned, furrowed, honest face, his widely-extended mouth, his glaring eyes! His opponent, the Asturian, looks equally fierce and determined. His head is covered with a leathern skull-cap; he wears a coarse, dark-coloured velveteen jacket, breeches of the same material, coarse stockings, and strong shoes. He flourishes his barrel violently. Verily they are formidable antagonists! Just, however, as they are about to belabour each other with the empty casks, roars of laughter are heard from the fountain's brink, where the other water-carriers had been filling their barrels, and were marching off with them, leaving plenty of room for the pugnacious rivals to follow their example! So, shrugging their shoulders, they applied their own barrels to their natural purposes, filling and shouldering them at once, and then trudging off in different directions.

It is now about half-past twelve: the Puerta del Sol is filling fast; and, assuredly, the *coup-d'œil* is very remarkable. There are knots of military officers in gay uniforms, by the side of little groups of *lechuginos*, or dandies, dressed in the newest French morning costumes, smoking their

pure Havannahs, all chatting about trifles, and occasionally paying their compliments to ladies that pass, accompanied by their mammas, or followed closely by a confidential female servant of a mature age. How graceful those Spanish ladies are! How beautifully they arrange their elegant mantillas! How prettily they hold their out-spread fans over their hands, to shield them from the noonday sun!

In one corner are half-a-dozen, or so, middle-aged, sallow-complexioned gentlemen, whose grave yet anxious countenances denote a dissatisfied state of mind. They belong to classes with which Madrid society abounds, namely, the Césantes and Prétendientes. The former are persons who had held situations in government offices, and were turned out of them when the last ministry fell—their occupations have *ceased:* the latter conceive they have claims on the existing cabinet, but their eager pretensions have, as yet, been disregarded. Both parties, though abhorring each other, unite in abusing the hapless ministers for the time being, as, like mourners at a funeral, they stand enveloped in their dusky cloaks on the Puerta del Sol; where, too, the church has its representatives, in those four *curas*, or priests, in their long black cassocks, and yard-long shovel-hats.

Several *ciégos*, or blind news-hawkers, offer their flying-sheets for sale among the buzzing groups. These *ciégos* are a sort of blind corporation, whose members enjoy the monopoly of crying and selling newspapers, official announcements, ballads, etc., all over Madrid. With well-practised lungs, they bawl out the heads of the news, with any exciting scraps of their own invention, which they calculate will increase the demand for their papers. Sprinkled here and there, too, are Valencian water-sellers, in their bright-red woollen caps, exactly in the form of the ancient Phrygian bonnet, and wearing kilts made of strong white linen. Their legs are bare, and their feet sandalled. They carry the cool water in straight barrels, made of cork, slung across their shoulders, and have three or four tumblers in a light basket with compartments, which they carry in one hand: they have plenty of customers.

Here is a *májo*, or Andalusian dandy! What a gay jacket! so bedizened with embroidery that it is difficult to discover of what material it is made; on the shoulders are clusters of round, open-worked, gold buttons, that have the appearance of small epaulettes. He wears a small velvet cap adorned with little tassels. This cap is something in the shape of an inverted boat: it is a mystery to me how he keeps it so jauntily on his head. His dark brown cloak slants from one shoulder to the other elbow, under which the slope is tucked up in graceful folds, keeping it just clear of the ground. He is manipulating a little tobacco cut very small, which will in a minute be dexterously rolled up in the tiny leaf of Valencian paper, torn out of the small book with a smart paper cover, which he has between his fingers. These little books, of a peculiar paper, made on purpose for paper-cigars, are sold in large quantities throughout Spain: each leaf contains the exact quantity required for one cigar.

Itinerant vendors of cakes, fruit, and sweetmeats; boys with bits of lighted rope for the accommodation of cigar-smokers; dogs, donkeys, fowls, and a large hog in a temporary sty, which is to be raffled for, for the benefit of some charitable institution: these, and other heterogeneous figures, contribute to fill up the canvass of the picture of the Puerta del Sol.

It is past two P.M.; the crowd disperses, and in a few minutes all is silent, excepting the plashing of the fountain, or the bray of a donkey, who, having lagged behind to munch a few stray cabbage-leaves, is galloping after his distant fellows with outstretched, shaven tail, extended ears, and yawning mouth.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

PROTRACTED LABOUR.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.—I. THE EXISTING EVIL.

LABOUR, before the fall of Adam, was never intended to be other than a blessing to mankind. The employment of human energies in the accomplishment of any praiseworthy purpose, or in the production of anything useful or desirable, is a pleasurable, not a painful exercise. Occupation is as necessary to man as food or raiment; and the law which ordained that the latter should result from the former, is a law as benevolent as it is wise and just. It was calculated by Franklin that if all who are in a condition to labour *did* labour, the whole of the work done by the human race would be done easily, by the joint exertions of all, during six hours a day—an estimate which other calculators have reduced to less than five hours. We have no intention of advocating any such equal division of labour, which in its effects would be as destructive and oppressive as it is plausible in theory; but the fact which the calculation brings to light is of the first importance, and should not be lost sight of. Keeping this fact in mind, let us glance at the present condition of some of our labourers.

Had the British government been despotic, and decreed fifty years ago that certain of the industrial orders of this country should lapse at once from the condition in which they then were, to that which they now occupy, the decree would have been considered equivalent to the doom of slavery, and the whole nation would have risen as one man to resist the tyranny, at whatever cost. But what no government would have dared to attempt, private greed and selfishness have accomplished; and what no man would have submitted to all at once, multitudes have been brought by slow degrees to tolerate, if not without a murmur, yet without resistance. The thirst after riches, the furor of competition, the necessities of rash adventure and ruinous speculation—causes now in operation on all sides—have brought upon the industrial classes of our great cities a monstrous and oppressive evil, by transforming the blessing of labour into a curse—the occupation which should be the glory of a man's life, into the minister of his misery and degradation. Protracted labour, then, is the evil of which we complain—the late hour system, which dulls, deadens, annihilates the "intellectual soul" of our industrious classes; which ruins their health, sends annually hundreds

to the lunatic asylum, thousands to the hospital or to the care of their friends in sickness, and thousands more to their graves; and which debases, demoralises, and renders callous to all manly and christian sympathies, numbers that survive the ordeal. We may well ask, what is gained by such an array of terrible sacrifices? and we may well recoil from the reply, that nothing is gained beyond an additional curse, because cruelty towards our dependants defeats its own end and heaps only retribution on the employer. We shall take the liberty to look a little closely into facts, and see, and let the reader see, whether there are valid grounds for the dissatisfaction existing, and fast increasing, against the system of protracted labour, and for such discontinuance of it as the public may be moved to manifest. The cry for Early Closing was first raised among the class who suffer most numerously, though not the most severely, from protracted hours of labour. The draper's assistant first sounded the note of alarm, and to him we turn first for testimony as to the state of the case.

The "young man" (he is supposed never to grow old) who passes his life behind a draper's counter, rises in the morning about seven to commence the duties of the day. What his duties are, all the world knows, and they need no description from us. It is an error, however, to suppose that they are either light or trivial in themselves, and on that account easy of endurance. The reverse is the fact; they frequently involve the exercise of muscular power, and they preclude the possibility of even a momentary relaxation or repose. The draper is on his feet from the hour of his entering the shop to that of quitting it. Unlike the artisan or handicraftsman, he has no "dinner-hour"—no stated period of rest at meals—but must take them when he can, in a few hurried minutes, and must submit to be called away in the middle of a meal, if necessary. His comforts are at the mercy of the customer's caprices, and he is expected to be courteous and polite, however ill at ease. He has risen to labour with the handicraftsman; he labours on while the handicraftsman takes his noonday recreation; and long after the latter has gone home to his family, he still stands behind the counter until nine, ten, eleven o'clock, when the shop closes its shutters. But even then his labours are not at an end. It may happen—and after a day of brisk trade it does happen—that when the shutters are up, there is a mountain of goods, overhauled by customers during the day, which have to be re-folded, re-arranged, and stowed away, before his work is done. Thus it happens frequently that, as often as Saturday night comes, the labour of the week is carried far into the Sunday morning, and, in summer time, day will dawn upon the work ere it is at an end, and a morning's walk and a bath in the Serpentine will serve as a substitute for the night's rest.

Next comes the chemist and druggist's assistant. He depones that he is at his place behind the counter at eight in the morning, and often earlier; that though he sits an hour or so in the course of the day, and reads the London Pharmacopœia, he is yet as much confined to the shop as the draper: he often does not close before midnight, and is roused from his first sleep to dispense a prescription, and perhaps rung up a second time before he has dropped to sleep again. He adds, moreover, that he has but one Sunday per fortnight of his own, and in his last place had but one per month. He objects to the perpetual atmosphere of drugs, the odour of which has taken away his appetite, and is of opinion that the opportunity of imbibing a little fresh air every day, would do more towards restoring that, and the capillary circulation, too, which flags sadly, than all the quinine in the shop.

The milliner-lass now steps forward modestly, and tells a tale still more striking. She was apprenticed to, and still works for, one who has a large establishment in a street at the West End. While an apprentice, she sat at her needle fifteen and sixteen hours a day, inclusive of the few minutes allowed for meals, in the ordinary course of business. Upon occasions of pressure, she often wrought the whole night, and several times has sat up working two nights in succession; she has worked with her companions nineteen hours a day for ten days running, exclusive of the Sunday, when she lay a-bed the whole day. She sits down to dinner four days a week, upon an average, to cold meat, which she cannot touch, making her meal from bread, potatoes, and toast-and-water. She is not hysterical herself, but has seen her companions fall in fainting-fits, through the feebleness induced by long vigils and distaste for food. In some places, when there is not sufficient business to employ the young ladies more than twelve hours a day, business is considered slack, and all but the old hands are discharged.

After the milliner comes the journeyman baker. He declares that the labour he has to perform is as toilsome as that of any trade going, and if we doubt it, he recommends us to try our hand at laying the dough for a batch. He says his wages are the shortest, and his hours the longest, known among working men. He knows men in situations where they don't get five hours out of the twenty-four to themselves, and only half the Sunday. Such men do not marry—how can they? they have no social status, no home, no society but cockroaches and black-beetles and meal-worms. They do not live a man's life; they dream of it perhaps, but they have no domestic happiness; their fireside is the oven's mouth, and their couch is a corner in the bakehouse, where they lie and snore for an hour or two on a few empty sacks, after a hard day's work, till it is time to get up and see about the breakfast rolls. This sort of thing makes the poor fellows thirsty, and if they get an hour to spare and a shilling to spend, they too often go and spend it at the public-house. It is the men with little masters doing a few sacks a week, that are the worst off—where one man does all the work. Where there is a large trade, the pay is better and the labour is divided; but bad, and very bad too, is the best.

The omnibus driver cannot attend to give *his* evidence, and we are obliged to mount the box beside him, and cross-examine him as he drives along. He mounts the box, he tells us, before eight in the morning, and is off about as much before twelve at night. What little interval there is in the course of the day, is barely long enough to get the food he requires down his throat. His work lasts sixteen hours a day, seven days a

week. Seven times sixteen, he says, is a hundred and twelve hours a week—nigh twice as long as a bricklayer works. They had a meeting some time back, to try and better themselves, and had to call the meeting between twelve and one in the morning, as the earliest moment at their command; but no good came of it. He has a wife and four children—hardly ever sees the "young 'uns" except when they're asleep—hopes they'll turn out well, but can't consider himself 'sponsible for that, further than paying for their schooling, which he'll do. Conductor is in the same predicament with himself—is a married man too, with a family. The stable-men in some of the yards are worse off still; they have to get their teams ready before they start in the morning, and to litter and look after the horses when he has driven the last journey at night. He is decidedly of opinion that something ought to be done for omnibus men, but he can't leave the business now—has sat on the box too long to be fit for anything else.

The journeyman printer now requests to be heard on the same subject. He remembers the time when his occupation was a pleasant one, when the hours of labour were ten, or, towards the close of the month, twelve per day. But within the last quarter of a century a fearful change for the worse has gradually crept into the profession. The trade is now characterised by alternations of comparative, almost total idleness, and headlong, desperate hurry—both of which are grievously oppressive to the workman, and both morally and physically hurtful. In slack times, men loiter about the printing-offices, with next to nothing to do; and when work comes in, it is supposed to be done by a species of magic, in less time than it would have taken formerly to fix on the best mode of doing it. The only magic used, however, is the driving, late-hour system, and the limits of its tyranny are fixed by nothing short of the uttermost limits of human endurance. It is the government which is, beyond all parallel, the oppressor in the printing-office. Legislation has latterly grown as headlong as commercial speculation, and scorns to wait. When parliament chooses to be exigent, the compositor works from six in the morning till ten at night, Sundays included, for six or eight weeks together, standing for the most part the whole time, or, if he sits, doing so at the risk of pecuniary loss. But even this is nothing, compared to the getting out of a blue book peremptorily ordered to be printed by Mr. Speaker. "On such occasions," says the compositor, "I have wrought as much as thirty, forty, fifty, and even more hours at a stretch, exclusive only of abbreviated intervals for meals. I have fallen asleep standing, and have seen men staggering and stupid with exhaustion and unbroken vigils. What is more, I have seen boys—children of twelve or fourteen—undergoing the same torture, until half delirious for want of sleep; and all this taking place in an atmosphere so foul, that it could not be breathed by one not gradually seasoned to its pollution." He further adds, that nothing extra is gained by the workman from these superhuman efforts, not a farthing of money, only injury to his constitution or the seeds of some fatal disease; and he deprecates earnestly the late-hour system, and sighs for a return to the good old plan, which gave him his evenings for the society of his family, and his sabbaths for the service of his Maker.

But the grocer's assistant begs that he also may be heard, and we must allow him to put in a word. He tells us that he is unfortunately situated, and worse off than many of his brethren. He dwells in a district populous with the humbler classes, and which, unluckily for him, is the arena of the Sunday morning's market. His customers breakfast early, and as most of them live from hand to mouth, he has to take down the shutters at six in the morning, and never puts them up before ten, after which the shop-door yet continues open for an hour. On Saturdays the case is aggravated—the shop swarming with customers, who, not receiving their wages till near midnight, cannot purchase the morrow's provisions at any other time, unless, as many of them do, they defer their marketing till the Sunday morning. Then, too, he has to be ready for them, and by seven his shop is open and the shutters down. When the bell tolls for church, he puts up the shutters again, but continues weighing and measuring at the counter till the hour of noon is past. He tells us that the Sunday is no sabbath to him; the best use he is in a condition to make of it is to go to bed after dinner and sleep out the rest of the day, to recruit his strength for the ensuing week. He is of opinion that the late pay-masters do a good deal towards necessitating the late shop-keeping, and that something might be done for him and his class, if employers would take to the practice of early payment.

The above testimony on the subject is as much as we can afford room for at present. The butcher's man would like to make his statement; he has really no pleasure, vigorously as he does it, in bawling "What d'ye buy? What d'ye buy?" till past twelve o'clock at night, or repeating the strain while the church-bells are ringing on Sunday morning, and would much rather finish his week's labours at a decent hour. The tailor, too, would be glad to be released before midnight from that coat which he has been stitching all day, and from that cross-legged position which is so bad for his digestion. The shoe-maker, bent double over his lapstone, does not work by choice till one or two in the morning; nor is it altogether by choice that he is seen at the currier's in White-cross-street, buying sole-leather and heel-ball while his betters are on the way to a place of worship. The tobacconist's shopman wishes it to be understood that he really has no predilection for turning night into day, or the Sunday into a week-day; and that he—and, for the matter of that, his master too—would be but too glad to close the shop-doors at a reasonable hour, if the public and his rivals in trade would concur in the proceeding. All these unite in the general complaint against the system of late shopping and late working; and to these we might add an indefinite number of workers at other trades and crafts, who are suffering more or less from the same oppressive causes. But we have cited evidence enough, we think, to prove our case, and to set before the reader the ugly aspect of the existing evil.

In closing this preliminary paper, we take the liberty to remind our readers and the public, that

the removal of the evil must depend upon themselves and upon their individual conviction of its hatefulness. Government, by a ten hours bill, has prevented to a great extent its operation upon one defenceless class; but it is not in the power of a government, nor is it desirable, perhaps, that it should be, to control the commercial and industrial forces of the country: these are in the hands of the community, and it is from the influence of the community alone that we can hope to see them righteously controlled.

THE BEACON FIRES OF PROSE AND POETRY.

"The trumpet's voice hath roused the land,
Light up the beacon pyre!
A hundred hills have seen the brand,
And waved the sign of fire."

ONE of the wonders of our day is undoubtedly the electric telegraph; and the latest marvel which that has accomplished, must be admitted to be the transmission of intelligence from the seat of war to Downing-street in the course of twenty-four hours. It will be found, however, a curious subject for reflection, to look back a little on the days of our forefathers, and to notice how in the time of war the beacon fire performed a sort of an analogous office to those discharged at present by the overland and submarine wire.

In almost all countries, from remote antiquity down to comparatively recent times, the practice of lighting fires by night has prevailed, signalising the approach of a foreign enemy, some impending danger, or other intelligence of pressing importance. They were intended to put the inhabitants upon the alert, who were to convey the warning notice in a similar manner to more distant points. "Blow the trumpet in Tekoa," says the prophet Jeremiah, "and set up a *sign of fire* in Bethhaccerem, for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction." Fixed stations were appointed at which the blazing signals were to be kindled, the materials being kept in constant readiness. The sites chosen were commonly the tops of hills, in order for the beacons to command an extensive horizon; but in the absence of natural elevations, lofty stands or towers were constructed for the purpose, and the towers of churches have been devoted to it. Pliny calls these signals "notice-giving fires," *ignes prænuntiativi*, as occasional only, and thus distinguishes them from the light-houses, or *phari*, placed upon the coasts for the direction of ships, which were constant. The sudden lighting up of the dark night—the stir occasioned by the glare in its own neighbourhood, and on being seen at a remote station—with the flight of the illumination from hill to hill—have originated some of the finest passages of poetry.

Æschylus, in the "Agamemnon," represents the intelligence of the capture of Troy as conveyed to Greece by beacon fires. Nothing can be more grand and impressive than the opening scene, with the solitary watchman in the tower, who for ten long years has watched nightly for the flaming signal announcing the fall of the city, and who at last beholds its blaze. Clytemnestra informs the chorus of the event, and in reply to the question, What messenger conveyed the intelligence? describes the progress of the fiery herald from isle to isle, and hill to hill, in a passage which has seldom been equalled for picturesque animation. The following is a paraphrastic, but not unfaithful translation:—

"A gleam—a gleam—from Ida's height,
By the fire-god sent, it came;—
From watch to watch it leapt that light,
As a rider rode the flame!
It shot through the startled sky,
And the torch of that blazing glory,
Old Lemnos caught on high,
On its holy promontory,
And sent it on, the jocund sign,
To Athos, mount of Jove divine.
Wildly the while, it rose from the isle,
So that the might of the journeying light
Skimmed over the back of the gleaming brine!
Further and faster speeds it on,
Till the watch that keep Macistus steep—
See it burst like a blazing sun!
Doth Macitus sleep
On his tower-clad steep?
No rapid red doth the wild-fire sweep;
It flashes afar, on the wayward stream
Of the wild Euripus, the rushing beam!
It rouses the light on Messeapion's height,
And they feed its breath with the withered heath.
But it may not stay!
And away—away
It sounds in its freshening might.
Silent and soon,
Like a broadened moon,
It passes in sheen, Asopus green,
And burst on Cithœron grey!
The warder wakes to the signal-rays,
And it swoops from the hill with a broader blaze,
On—on the fiery glory rode—
Thy lonely lake, and Gorgopis glowed—
To Magara's mount it came;
They feed it again,
And it streams amain—
A giant beard of flame!"

The Greeks employed fire beacons during the Peloponnesian war; and in a treatise commonly attributed to Aristotle, it is stated that such signals were so disposed on watch-towers through the dominions of the Persian kings, that within the space of a day they could receive intelligence of any disturbances plotted or commenced in the most distant parts. Though this is an evident exaggeration, it testifies to the existence of the practice, which has been a common mode of communication, conducted upon a great scale, in the Chinese empire.

To come nearer home, and our own times, Stowe relates in his "Annals," among the precautions taken by Edward II, relative to the return of the queen and Mortimer, that he ordained beacons to be set up, "that the same being fired might be seen far off, and thereby the people be raised." They were simply stacks of wood on high places; but, in the next reign, pitch-boxes were used, and became the proper beacons. Watches were regularly kept at them; and at the more important points along the coast, or in the border counties, horsemen were in attendance by day, when the fire would not be seen, to give notice of an enemy's approach. Those by the sea-side, and on the frontier, were the most carefully guarded, as their surprise was an object of policy with an invading foe, in order to prevent the alarm from being spread. For the maintenance of the beacons, there

was an assessment called *Beconagium*, which was levied by the sheriffs of counties upon the hundreds. A chart exists in the British Museum of the coast of Dorsetshire from Lyme to Weymouth, and another of that of Suffolk from the mouth of the Orwell to the neighbourhood of Yarmouth, both exhibiting the beacons and forts which were erected against the Spanish Armada. The instructions issued relative to the watching of them are also extant. Macaulay has graphically described their use in his fine ballad :—

" For swift to east and swift to west, the warning radiance spread,
High on St. Michael's Mount it shone—it shone on Beachy Head.
Far on the deep the Spaniard saw, along each southern shire,
Cape beyond cape, in endless range, those twinkling points of fire;
The fisher left his skiff to rock on Tamar's glittering waves,
The rugged miners poured to war from Mendip's sunless caves.
O'er Longleat's towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks, the fiery herald flew;
He roused the shepherds of Stonehenge, the rangers of Beaulieu.
Right sharp and quick, the bells all night rang out from Bristol town,
And ere the day three hundred horse had met on Clifton down;
The sentinel on Whitehall gate looked forth into the night,
And saw o'erhanging Richmond-hill the streak of blood-red light.
Then bugle's note and cannon's roar, the death-like silence broke,
And with one start, and with one cry, the royal city woke.
At once on all her stately gates, arose the answering fires;
At once the wild alarum clashed from all her reeling spires;
From all the batteries of the Tower, pealed loud the voice of fear;
And all the thousand masts of Thames, sent back a louder cheer:
And from the furthest wards was heard the rush of hurrying feet,
And the broad streams of flags and pikes, dashed down each roaring street;
And broader still became the blaze, and louder still the din,
As fast from every village round, the horse came spurring in:
And eastward straight, from wild Blackheath, the warlike errand went,
And roused in many an ancient hall the gallant squires of Kent.
Southward from Surrey's pleasant hills, flew those bright couriers forth;
High on bleak Hampstead's swarthy moor, they started from the north;
And on, and on, without a pause, untired they bounded still;
All night from tower to tower they sprang—they sprang from hill to hill;
Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Darwin's rocky dales—
Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales—
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern's lonely height—
Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light—
Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Ely's stately fane,
And tower and hamlet rose in arms o'er all the boundless plain,
Till Belvoir's lordly terraces the sign to Lincoln sent,
And Lincoln sped the message on o'er the wide vale of Trent;
Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's embattled pile,
And the red glare on Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle."

We have memorials of the age of beacons in actual remains of them, and in many names of places where they were erected. An iron fire-pot was recently standing, if not at present, upon the tower of Hadley church, in Middlesex. At the close of the last century, the traces of a beacon, ascended to by a flight of steps, and the ruins of a watch-house, existed on the western edge of Ingleborough, a mountain in Yorkshire, rising to the height of 2300 feet; and the fire-hearths of four large ones were traceable on Dunkerry-beacon, in Somersetshire, a hill on the eastern extremity of Exmoor, so called from its ancient office. In a similar manner, we have the Caermarthenshire and Brecknockshire beacons, lofty summits in those counties, with the Hereford and Worcester beacons, two of the Malvern hills. Beaconsfield, a small town on high ground in Buckinghamshire, was doubtless once the site of a beacon. The term itself is Anglo-Saxon, derived from *beac* or *bec*, a sign or signal, the common root of the words " beck" and " beckon."

North of the Tweed, the " bale fires," as they were styled, from a bale or faggot, formed a fiery chain of communication between the border and the capital, announcing hostile demonstrations of the English, and forays across the boundary. By an act of the Scottish parliament in 1455, it was ordered that one bale or faggot should forewarn an apparent advance of the enemy in any manner; two bales were to be kindled if they were indeed coming; and four bales if they appeared in unusual strength. Scott, in the " Lay of the Last Minstrel," vividly pictures the exhibition of the ominous sign :—

" Is yon the star, o'er Penchryst Pen,
That rises slowly to her ken,
And spreading broad its wavering light,
Shakes its loose tresses on the night?
Is yon red glare the western star?
Oh, 'tis the beacon blaze of war!
Scarce could she draw her tightened breath,
For well she knew the fire of death!
The warder viewed it blazing strong,
And blew his war-note loud and long;
The blast alarmed the festal hall,
And started forth the warriors all;
Far downward in the castle yard,
Full many a torch and cresset glared;
And helms and plumes confusedly tossed
Were in the blaze half seen, half lost.

. . . .

Ride, Alton, ride, for death and life,
And warn the warden of the strife;
Young Gilbert, let our beacon blaze,
Our kin, and clan, and friends to raise.
The ready page, with hurried hand,
Awaked the need-fire's slumbering brand,
And ruddy flashed the heaven;
For a sheet of flame, from the turret high,
Waved like a blood-flag in the sky,
All flaring and uneven;
And soon a score of fires, I ween,
From height, and hill, and cliff were seen;
Each with warlike tidings fraught;
Each from each the signal caught;
Each after each they glanced to sight,
As stars arise upon the night.
They gleamed in many a dusky tarn,
Haunted by the lonely earn;
On many a cairn's grey pyramid,
Where urns of mighty chiefs lay hid."

Another passage is appropriate to present circumstances, sketching a change of scene :—

"Sweet Teviot! on thy silver tide,
The glaring bale-fires blaze no more,
No longer steel-clad warriors ride
Along thy wild and willow'd shore.
Where'er thou wind'st by dale or hill,
All, all is peaceful, all is still;
As if thy waves since time was born,
Since first they roll'd upon the Tweed,
Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
Nor started at the bugle horn."

Thus may our streams, hills, and valleys, ever remain apart from the symbols of conflict and the disturbances of war, associated only with the occupations of industry and the charms of nature. The age in which this cumbrous method of maintaining communication was adopted, forms a striking contrast with the present, when intelligence is conveyed by the electric current with the speed of lightning, both over the land and under the waters of the ocean. Besides the occasional alarm fires, beacons were in stated use by night on the coast, at an early period, for the benefit of mariners, casting a feeble light upon the darkened deep, and only visible through a very circumscribed space. They were generally, as emblematic of safety, in the form of a little cross or cresset, being a large lantern kindled, and fastened on the top of a long pole fixed in the ground. The name of Flamborough Head, the boldest promontory on the east coast of England, is supposed to be derived from the practice of placing a light at that point in early times, and is thus equivalent to the expression of the Headland with the Flame.

A DINNER UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Self-possession, in moments when danger threatens ourselves or others, is undoubtedly a most valuable quality, and one which it would be well to endeavour to cultivate by all judicious means. In my own experience, an incident once occurred that powerfully illustrates this truth; and, with my reader's permission, I shall now briefly narrate it.

Many years ago, when a very young man, pursuing my professional studies, I was resident, during the summer months, at the lovely little village of ——, on the shores of the romantic estuary of one of our great rivers, in the hope of recovering health, somewhat impaired by too assiduous application over the midnight oil. Among the casual acquaintanceships which I formed, there was a very slight one with a gentleman in the neighbourhood, whom I shall call by the name of Johnson. This individual was a stout, short, thick-set single gentleman of middle age, of mild yet somewhat grave aspect and gentlemanly manners. He possessed no striking peculiarities of character, and was generally respected as a quiet, unassuming, and inoffensive man.

I had been for some months in the village, and was on tolerably familiar terms with most of the ordinary residents, as well as the few summer visitors who frequented the place, when a rumour of a most extraordinary character suddenly spread abroad, and set every gossip on the alert. This rumour was neither more nor less than that the grave Mr. Johnson had been seen at an early hour of the morning, on a certain common near the beach, pirouetting and posturing in the most unaccountable manner, and finishing his extraordinary performance by a dance somewhat in the style of the Ojibbeway Indians. Every one, of course, had his own comment on this singular occurrence. One would have it that he had been returning in a state of semi-inebriety, after dining with a half-pay captain in the neighbourhood. Another, that he was merely taking needful exercise, as he was much confined in the office during the day; while a third insisted that there was only one feasible explanation of the mystery, when the man's character and other circumstances were taken into account, and that was, that he was stark staring mad. Which of these surmises was the correct one, the sequel will show.

A day or two after the report above alluded to had been in circulation, I was standing on the pier, conversing with the captain of the local steamer which had just arrived, when Mr. Johnson made up to me in a hurried and excited way quite foreign to him, and, shaking me warmly by the hand, inquired after my welfare. As I before hinted, my acquaintance with him was but slight, so that I felt both surprised and somewhat uneasy at the unusual warmth of his salutation. This, however, he did not seem to observe, but continued to talk in a rapid and, occasionally, slightly incoherent manner, on a variety of subjects, concluding by asking me home to dine with him in a way which admitted of no denial. In vain I pleaded a prior engagement, in vain I asked leave only to run to my lodgings to change my dress; he would listen to no excuse, but taking a firm grasp of my arm, which he never for a moment relaxed, hurried me towards the house where he lodged. Ushering me into his sitting-room, he gave orders to the servant to bring dinner as soon as possible; and then, turning to me, proceeded in a low tone, and with an air of mystery, to inform me how he had of late been favoured with certain visions and revelations of the most marvellous nature; how the medium of these revelations was a certain gentleman of ancient renown, and of erratic propensities, named Orion, well known to students of mythology in connection with his aquatic exploits on a dolphin's back; how he had been endowed by this medium with the power of saving himself and friends from an impending terrible calamity. "But," added he, fixing his eyes upon me, "there is a condition which must be complied with, before this power can be exercised with effect; and this condition implies a sacrifice, and the shedding of blood, to purify me and fit me for my high mission."

The conviction, which had been momentarily growing, now burst upon me, that I was in the presence of a raving maniac; and that the reader may appreciate the trying nature, not to say danger, of my position, I may state that the house, though at no great distance from others, was secluded in its own grounds, and surrounded by trees; that the only other person in it besides the madman and myself was the servant girl before mentioned, as the family were all from home; while the chance of relief appearing, in the form of a casual visitor, was very faint indeed. While earnestly occupied in detailing to me the incoherent

dreams of a disturbed fancy, the servant entered with the dinner; and with evident marks of trepidation and terror, which did not serve to reassure my spirits, she deposited the materials and accompaniments of the meal, and hastily withdrew.

It is needless to remark that my appetite was somewhat of the smallest. In fact, what with my uneasiness lest the unfortunate maniac should take it into his head to injure either himself or me, anxious speculations as to the probability of assistance arriving, and with wonder how it was all to end, I could scarcely swallow a mouthful. But my host was so pre-occupied with his own thoughts and communications, that he did not observe the lack of justice I did to his viands, and continued to talk of his visionary experiences in a strain of rapid and voluble earnestness, boasting of his ability to perform all sorts of impossible exploits, with an air of the most grave and settled conviction. "Ah! Mr. M——," said he, "you cannot form the slightest conception of the glorious visitants I am favoured with. Surrounded by an atmosphere of the most delicious music, their every gesture the very poetry of motion"—and, as if to give me an illustration of his waking dreams, he suddenly started up, and commenced a kind of grotesque dance, while he whistled, or rather hissed out through his dry and cracked lips, some wretched imitation of a popular air. Not knowing what else to do, I sat uneasily still, and watched him; and really his powers of endurance were wonderful. He shuffled, gyrated, and pirouetted for an incredible length of time, without a symptom of fatigue, and with a liveliness and vivacity that were quite distressing. I was heartily tired of the performance, and was calculating when he should be obliged to give in through sheer exhaustion, when all at once a "change" seemed to come over him; for, ceasing his perpetual motion, and hastily muttering something about the "time for action having arrived," he rushed into the little closet, which served both as dressing and bedroom, and which opened from the apartment in which we had dined. Conceive, reader, my horror, when I heard him rattle something, which I felt morally certain, from the sound, was a case of razors. Desperate at the thought of his obtaining possession of those deadly implements in his present state of mind, I hastened into the bedroom, and recollecting his having spoken of some letters he had to despatch, I reminded him in a hurried manner that the post-bag would be closed immediately, and, while his mind was thus diverted into a new channel, I quietly slipped the razor-case into my pocket. Remembering my having heard or read something of the power of the human eye over madmen, I tried the experiment on this occasion; but every attempt to catch his eye completely failed, from my having to encounter the glassy stare of a very unimpressible pair of spectacles which he wore, and which rendered perfectly hopeless every effort to penetrate them. But relief was now at hand. A smart double rap at the door, which was followed, when the girl opened it, by the authoritative demand, "Show me into Mr. Johnson's room," in Dr. S——'s well known voice, was as music to my ears; and though the worthy doctor had a complexion approaching the colour of brick-dust, an exaggerated Roman nose, and no particular chin, I thought when he entered the room I had never seen so pleasant a countenance. My equanimity was not a little increased likewise, by observing that he was followed by a stalwart gamekeeper and one or two villagers, who seemed intended as a *corps de reserve*, and who slipped into the kitchen as he entered our apartment.

It was curious to observe the effect of his appearance on the unhappy maniac. Advancing to the doctor with an air of haughty coldness, yet with perfect good breeding: "May I ask," said he, "to what cause I am indebted for this visit? I am not aware that it is by my invitation you are here; and——"

"No, sir," said Dr. S., brusquely interrupting him, and evidently determined to carry things with a high hand, "I am here by an authority superior to yours;" and then added, sternly: "Sit down, sir; now, show me your tongue."

After a slight display of hesitation, his haughty mien deserted him, and he slunk to a chair with the subdued manner of a snubbed child. Thereafter he yielded passively to whatever was demanded of him, while Dr. S. was present; but I afterwards learnt that it took four strong men to undress and put him to bed, so powerful was his resistance when he understood the doctor had taken his departure.

As the surgeon's arrival was the signal of my release, I need not trespass further on the reader's patience than to observe, that I saw him embarked next day, under judicious control, on his way to a lunatic asylum in the neighbouring city. The circumstances of the case, which I have given as they occurred, are indelibly impressed upon my mind; and I sincerely trust it may never again be my lot to dine under such trying circumstances.

HOW TO BE HAPPIER.—A venerable farmer, some eighty years of age, said to a relative who lately visited him: "I have lived on this farm for more than half a century. I have no desire to change my residence as long as I live on earth. I have no desire to be any richer than I now am. I have worshipped the God of my fathers with the same people for more than forty years. During that period, I have rarely been absent from the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and have never lost but one communion season. I have never been confined to my bed by sickness a single day. The blessings of God have been richly spread around me, and I made up my mind long ago, that if I wished to be any happier, *I must have more religion.*

CONVERSION IN OLD AGE.—The late Rev. Dr. Bedell, of Philadelphia, in a sermon to young men, stated that he had been a minister over twenty years, and yet he could not remember more than three persons over *fifty* years of age, who had ever asked the momentous question, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

MISS JANE TAYLOR.—The amiable and gifted Jane Taylor, the last time she took up her pen—it was on the day preceding her death—wrote as follows: "Oh, my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have now, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death."